

to just a few people in our society. Owning an asset and being able to pass it on to your son or daughter should not be the purview of a few. In this great land, ownership ought to be spread to everybody—every single person.

As Wright Noll will tell you, the power of compound interest is important as well. He sees it every month in the checks he gets. Members of Congress need to listen to the people. A lot of people in America now understand we have a problem. A lot of people are sorting through the data. They're listening to the debate. They're hearing all the noise coming out of Washington. But they're hearing we got a problem. I'm going to keep talking about it over and over again because I want the people to understand the stakes of doing nothing.

Older Americans are beginning to hear loud and clear that if you get your check, nothing changes. And that's important for our citizens to hear. I'm sure some of you all have got a mom or a dad wondering what old—"Why is George W. talking about this? I want to make—just tell him, make sure I get my check." [Laughter] You'll get your check. You'll get your check.

There are some folks around this town trying to scare you because they don't want

to see anything happen. But our citizens who count on Social Security will get their check. Baby boomers like me, we're fixing to retire, and there's a lot of us. This is an important issue for us, but it's really an important issue for your children and grandchildren.

We have an obligation to save and strengthen this important program for generations of Americans to come. And when Congress acts, there will be plenty of credit for everybody involved. And when they do, our children and grandchildren will one day look back and be grateful that our generation made the difficult choices and the necessary choices to renew the great promise of the Social Security system for the 21st century.

Thank you all for giving me a chance to come by.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:24 a.m. at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to William "Billy" Gammon III, president, William Gammon Insurance Agency, Inc.; and Robert A. Rusbuldt, chief executive officer, and Thomas Grau, president, Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America, Inc.

Remarks on Presenting the President's Environmental Youth Awards *April 21, 2005*

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. I'm sorry we're not out in the gardens today but a pretty good place to have a visit, anyway, isn't it, the East Room? We're glad you're here. I want to welcome you as we honor some fine young stewards of our environment and to recognize their achievements.

All of you have given your time and energy to preserving our natural spaces. You're setting such a fine example, and we

appreciate the example. And today is our chance to tell you how proud we are of your good work.

I want to thank Steve Johnson, who is the Acting Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. I put this good man's nomination in front of the United States Senate for a reason, because he's plenty capable of doing the job, and now is the time for the United States Senate to confirm him. I'm proud that his wife, Debbie, is here, and Matt.

I want to thank my friend Congressman Vito Fossella, who has joined us. Congressman, thank you for being here.

We welcome all the EPA Regional Administrators, particularly those Administrators from the great State of Texas. [*Laughter*]

This week is National Volunteer Week, and we honor the 64 million Americans who volunteer and encourage others to join them. Since taking office, I have asked Americans to take an active role in serving their communities by dedicating 4,000 hours, or 2 years, over the course of their lives to helping others. In order to encourage people to help, I started the USA Freedom Corps, and that's a web site that match potential volunteers with opportunities to volunteer at the local level. And if you want to find out more about the web site, the USA Freedom Corps web site, go to www.usafreedomcorps.gov.

The 30 young men and women we honor here today in the White House answered the call to service. They know they have a responsibility to be citizens, not spectators, and that by serving a cause larger than themselves, communities grow stronger. One of the greatest responsibilities in a free society is responsible stewardship of our natural environment. All of you have taken that duty seriously. You have set a clear and strong example, and you're inspiring others to do their part.

Tomorrow I'm going to Tennessee, in honor of Earth Day, to help volunteers restore the trails at Cades Cove. I'm looking forward to getting my hands dirty—[*laughter*]*—*looking forward to getting outside of Washington. [*Laughter*]

As volunteers, you've put your talents to good use. In Cairo, Georgia, you set up a science camp to promote recycling. In St. Paul, Virginia, you helped restore a newly named wetland and made it an outdoor classroom. In Oklahoma and California, you cleaned up debris around local creeks. You built nesting boxes to protect local birds in Staten Island, New York. You

improved trout habitats in Hyrum, Utah. You started a project for the Fender's blue butterfly in Salem, Oregon. You spearheaded a public education program to protect a stream near Cleveland, Ohio. You planted a beech tree at an elementary school in Middletown, Rhode Island. And you taught schoolchildren about groundwaters in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Each of these acts touched a community, and together they are improving our Nation. All of you are meeting your responsibility to our country's natural spaces, and our Government is doing the same. America's air and water are cleaner today than they were in 2001. My budget for the coming year fulfills my commitment in 2001 to spend \$4.9 billion over 5 years to improve our national parks and to make our parks more inviting and accessible to all Americans.

We're implementing the Clear Skies rule to cut powerplant emissions by 70 percent. Under the farm bill I signed in 2002, we will provide \$40 billion over 10 years to help our farmers and ranchers protect wetlands, water quality, and wildlife habitats. I've pledged to restore, improve, and protect 3 million acres of wetlands over the next 5 years. To safeguard our forests and woodlands against fire damage, I've signed the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. And since I took office, the Departments of Interior and Agriculture have removed hazardous fuels from more than 10 million acres of Federal land.

Across America, we're working with State and local governments to accelerate the cleanup and redevelopment of old industrial sites. We're working hard to improve our environment, and so are you. Each of you here today has worked hard. You've been idealistic in the right way, and you've been dedicated. I know your parents are proud of you. Your communities are proud of you, and so is your President.

So it is now my great honor to welcome the 2005 winners of the President's Environmental Youth Awards. The Acting Administrator will do the duties.

[At this point, Acting Administrator Stephen L. Johnson introduced the award recipients from each region, and the President congratulated them.]

The President. Listen, thank you all for coming. We're proud to have you here in the White House. I want to welcome and congratulate our students again. I really

want to welcome your parents too. You've done a good job. And I want to thank your teachers. Teaching is a noble profession. We hope you enjoy the White House as much as Laura and I do.

God bless you all. Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:27 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deborah Johnson, wife of Acting Administrator Johnson, and their son, Matthew Johnson.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of John D. Negroponte as Director of National Intelligence *April 21, 2005*

I commend the Senate for moving quickly to confirm John Negroponte as the first Director of National Intelligence. I congratulate John on his confirmation, and I look forward to working closely with him. As the DNI, Ambassador Negroponte will lead a unified intelligence community as it reforms and adapts to the new challenges

of the 21st century. The United States continues to make progress in the global war on terror against the enemies of freedom who target innocent civilians and seek weapons of mass destruction. I appreciate John's willingness to once again serve his country and the many men and women who serve in the intelligence community.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Energy Legislation *April 21, 2005*

I commend the House for taking an important step to secure our energy future and to reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. The House energy legislation is largely consistent with the key objectives of my comprehensive national energy policy: increasing conservation and efficiency, expanding domestic production in environmentally responsible ways, diversifying our energy supply with more renew-

ables and clean fuels, and modernizing our energy infrastructure. For more than a decade, our Nation has not had a sensible, balanced, and comprehensive energy strategy. An energy bill will help us make better use of the energy supplies we have and will make our supply of energy more affordable and more secure for the future. I look forward to swift Senate action so that I can sign a bill into law by August.